

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at ZOOM, on
WEDNESDAY, 18 JANUARY 2023 at 6.00 pm**

Present: Councillor G Sell (Chair)
Councillors A Armstrong, R Freeman and B Light

Museum Society: D Kent, R Priestley, C Sharpe and T Watson

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director - Corporate Services), C Edwards (Democratic Services Officer) and C Wingfield (Curator - Saffron Walden Museum)

The Members formally expressed their condolences to Keith Eden on the very sad news of the death of his wife.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gregory, Keith Eden and Adrian Webb.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th October 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

3 MUSEUM CURATOR'S REPORT

The Curator presented her report for quarter 3, October to December 2022, and she highlighted the following: -

- User figures for this quarter were very encouraging, totalling 3,678 against a notional target of 2,200. The Curator said that the figures were boosted by the Tudor events at Great Hallingbury, which were supported by the Museum in the form of an exhibition and brought in an estimated 800 people. The Curator said that 1,200 users were due to the school loans boxes. The other visitor figures, although similar to the same quarter last year, were affected by the Museum being closed for a week due to icy weather.
- It had been a difficult quarter due to multiple problems with computer, phone and printer connectivity, at both the Museum and Shirehill store as well as on going heating problems.
- The Museum had not been able to get Historical Building consent to make changes to the front cellar in order to accommodate a modern combination/condensing boiler. She said a short-term solution had been put in place, but the development plans needed to deliver a longer-term solution, with a purpose built plant room that provided a more economical and environmentally friendly heating system.

- Work had progressed to change and improve the website, and after extensive quotations the Museum Society Board had agreed on a particular website designer. There was approximately £5k worth of work to be carried out funded by the Museum Society Board, with the option of more extensive changes to the website with the lottery funding.
- There were a number of projects underway, including the next stage of the Lost Language of Nature project and continued work with Epping on the World Cultures project. The Bone Black exhibition had opened as a private view.
- Income figures were over £3,200 from admissions and souvenirs.

The Chair asked about the current status of the lottery funding. The Curator said that the expression of interest had a one year time limit and would therefore need to be resubmitted. She said that further progress relied on getting the various surveys completed, the laser and photometric survey of the museum was essential as there were no existing comprehensive plans of the Museum. The Historic England requirements to contract a historical building specialist and an archaeologist to carry out a heritage impact assessment could be combined with the design and access statement.

In response to a question from the Chair regarding funding for the surveys, the Curator said that the funding required would come from the Museum Society and would be in the region of £10k to £20k. She said that more specific prices would come from the formal quotations once they had been received and hopefully the surveys would be completed by the middle of the year. She said that the third stage would involve getting a cost consultant who specialises in historic buildings to go over the costs again, especially in relation to inflationary costs within the bid. She said that the stage one grant application would hopefully be completed later this year, and once this was successful further work would start in early 2024.

Councillor Freeman said that if the Museum intended to replace the boiler, it would be worth considering using a different fuel. He suggested that wood was considered, as it provided a constant temperature and was a local fuel. The Curator said that it was helpful to have knowledge of alternatives and this would be considered.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Curator said that the Museum was now reasonably warm, especially the galleries and public areas. She said the main problem was not being able to fine tune the temperature, it was either on or off and there was a concern that some areas of the collections were too dry.

Councillor Light asked about the costume gallery radiator which was not working. The Curator said that the gallery could not be closed as it was a through route, but because of this it did also benefit from heat circulating from other areas. The Curator said that there was some old iron pipework which further complicated the heating situation this could only be replaced when the building was emptied for the new development.

In response to a question from Councillor Light, the Curator said that the replacement roof on the lean to would be a flat roof. She said that this was a medium-term measure to stop the ingress of water. The roof had some asbestos but this could be removed safely. She said that the roof would then be strong enough to act as a platform for maintenance to use ladders, in order to sort out the gutter and down pipe problems in the building, which could not be accessed in any other way. This would be moved forward as quickly as possible.

Councillor Freeman reminded Officers that the flood lights mesh needed to be cleaned of grass debris. The Curator said that the keys to the padlocks were in the Museum and she would ask grounds maintenance to deal with the issue.

4 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be moved to Wednesday 12th April because of the elections at the beginning of May, it was understood that the Curators report would be an interim report and would not have all the figures available from that quarter.

The meeting ended at 6.37pm